Mina Loy and - RRHEA: Politics of Flux and Flow

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Materialism has been an important aspect of experimental art across genres, from the paintings of Jackson Pollock, to the L=A=N=G=E poems, to Merce Cunningham’s dances. The emphasis on materialism rises out of the move away from what art can represent to what it actually is: paint, canvas, ink, phonemes, paper, movement. Rather than view materiality as a refinement and elevation of art to its purest elements, I view materiality as a politics of pushing boundaries, of creating flux, and of challenging artistic and socio-political status quo.

In keeping with the move away from representation, my research is not particularly interested in the politics in a poem (political subject matter or content), but rather the politics of a poem: how it uses form, the page, and language itself to either confront or subvert traditional ideas of language. I follow Rasmussen’s distinction between the politics in versus the politics of a poem gains much attention from experimental poets interested in confronting linguistic power structures and the larger social and political structures that create them. Theories dealing with the politics of a poem also intertwine with the critical work of Fredric Jameson and Gay Deleuze, both of whom deal with power structures and how we do and do not implicitly engage with and challenge those structures.

My research uses the lens of Bruce Andrews, experimental poet and theorist use terms similar to Rasmussen to detail the materiality of language in conversation with the early 20th century experimental poet Mina Loy. Loy’s writing demonstrates materiality which questions language as a system, offers alternate systems based on sound and flow rather than representation, and forces the reader to consider language’s limits and what could exist beyond those limits. Andrews’ theories and Loy’s poems are part of a much larger conversation questioning how one can write (or paint or dance or speak) within systems of language, society, and politics in order to challenge and expand those systems.